

An Open Letter to General Truscott

At Anzio All of Us Knew Kesselring

*From: Bernard Burton
To: Lt. Gen. L. K. Truscott
Sir:*

It would be too much to expect you to know every Third Division dogface who served under your command, especially at Anzio. So I don't expect you would remember me even though you stopped me once to ask, "How goes it son?"

But I figured that was as much for the fellows beside me as it was for my ears. I guess it came under the heading of morale-building because there was nothing to distinguish me from any of the others; all of us had a heavy growth of beard, our uniforms were equally muddy and sweat-stained and we must have all had that anguished, half-vacant stare that seemed to come over every GI after he had passed from one shock to another through numberless days of attack and counter-attack.

And, of all places, Anzio would be the last where one could expect a general to know individually the soldiers who fought under him. Not when that division has left 6,000 dead in the Anzio-Nettune cemetery and casualties were more than twice the full strength of the division. That's a big chunk for just one of the many Third's battles: North Africa, Sicily, Salerno, Southern France.

So, General, this isn't so much a letter from me as it for those



BOB MANEWITZ



THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, JUNE 4, 1964
RIVAL COMMANDERS AT ANZIO MEET: The leaders of the opposing forces on the beachhead in Italy eleven years ago as they met recently in Frankfurt, Germany, for the first time. Lieut. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, left, of the United States, and the German field marshal, Albert Kesselring, flank Mrs. Truscott. Both of the leaders are retired.

who served under you, the quick the dead, the maimed and, yes, even those who lost their reason under the ground-shaking artillery bursts of Anzio Annie and the scarcely audible mortar shells that seemed always zeroed in on us—like that pink-cheeked lad from Tennessee who took his first shave at Anzio and who jumped out of his hole after one prolonged shelling. It took five of us to hold him down and truss him up. The last I heard he was still a straitjacket case.

But, General, there was one name we all knew, you and I, privates and generals. Kesselring. Field Marshall Albert Kesselring.

The Italians on whose soil we fought and whose heroic partisans saved many an American life knew his name even better than we did. They cursed it then and they curse it now, perhaps with even greater bitterness than during the war.

This was the man who had ordered more than 300 Italian men and women dragged into the Arde-

atine Caves where they were butchered and the cave mouth sealed on their bodies. This was the man who had entire families of suspected partisans wiped out (you can see a truthful scene of
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HANK FORBES

AT ANZIO ALL OF US KNEW

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such incidents in the movie Paisan). We hated Kesselring also, but at least we were soldiers, not defenseless civilians, and we were armed, and we knew that we would win through and that we would catch up with this Butcher of Italy.

Well, General, I see you caught up with Kesselring in Frankfurt, Germany. I see you had cocktails together and you seemed to be genuinely enjoying each other's company. The picture I saw in the New York Times shows Mrs. Truscott with her arm in Kesselring's and all of you chuckling together.

I have no way of knowing how widely that photo was distributed in the States. I don't know if Scotty Benson's young widow saw it up in Maine, or Johnson's in Montana, or Russo's in Pittsburgh, or Levy's in Brooklyn, or Marquez's in New Mexico, or Patterson's in Kentucky. They wouldn't rest their hand on Kesselring's arm, Gen. Truscott.

And I know Hank Forbes' widow wouldn't do it either, General. Who is Hank Forbes? He lies buried at Anzio cemetery, out of Company C, 7th Regiment. He was a Communist, General, a leader of Communists. And after he died his widow wrote his company commander a letter which somebody in top echelon ordered read to the troops on the morning of the day of the breakthrough from Anzio. It was a letter that lent us courage and helped snap us out of the private thoughts each soldier mulls over to himself as he approaches the time of the Big Push with its imagined and real terrors. This letter got us to see again what we were fighting for and why we had to do what we did.

That didn't include laughing and sipping cocktails with Field Marshall Kesselring.

There's another name you ought to know, General, although I'm sure you don't. The name is Robert Manewitz. Bob wasn't in the

Third Division but he served a long time in Africa and Italy, three years I believe, and he served honorably. Bob was a good soldier because there was nothing he

wouldn't do to stop human beasts like Kesselring.

Bob wasn't a casualty of the war against Hitler, General. He's another kind of casualty, a casualty of the fight against the Great Betrayal. Bob fought the Nazis as a soldier, and he fought them after he got out. He fought, and still fights, against the mockery of our honored dead which sees Nazis win and dined by our generals as a prelude to rebuilding of the Wehrmacht.

And for that Bob Manewitz has just been sentenced to five years in prison in a Smith Act frameup in St. Louis. The government attorneys want Bob put away because he still believes in the same things he believed in when he served honorably in Italy.

Of course, Kesselring was also convicted. In May, 1947, a British tribunal sentenced him to death for war crimes committed in Italy. But in two months the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Two years ago he was set free, with full pardon. And now he heads an outfit called the Stahlhelm, an organization of neo-Nazi ruffians who wait impatiently for the signal to chant again: Heute Deutschland! Morgen die Welt! (Today Germany. Tomorrow, the world.)

General, if you don't know this, you should. The fellows used to call you a glory-hunter. They used to say that's why the Third had more casualties than any other division in the war. I didn't agree then and I don't know. A GI gets his orders and a field general gets his.

But this is no path to glory you have taken in Frankfurt. To honor the 6,000 who lie under wooden crosses and Stars of David at Anzio, men like Kesselring ought to be back behind bars, while men like Manewitz should go free to serve their country again as they have served it in the past.

All else, General, is mockery. All else is betrayal.

Sincerely,
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formerly with Co. K
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